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AUTHOR O'Shea, David W.
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ABSTRACT

Advocates of community control over local schools seek deference to parental preferences from the professional staff. Specific proposals include: (1) Staff accountability to parental representatives for student learning; (2) parental participation in the selection of school principals; (3) parental participation in school level decision-making, and (4) use of school facilities and resources for community development. To implement these means in New York City, it has been proposed that the new community districts be granted full autonomy. This proposal raises important policy-related questions. The first is whether the structure of suburban schools district governance actually does facilitate local community control over public elementary and secondary schooling? If it does, then the second question is what can we learn from the suburban experience that would help guide policies directed toward facilitating community control over schools serving inner-city areas? To explore the factors associated with the differential responsiveness of suburban as compared to inner-city schools, it is helpful to analyze several dimensions of educational governance, e.g., conditions that constrain suburban educators to be responsive to parental concerns, and contrasting conditions inhibiting school level responsiveness to inner-city parents. (Author/JM)

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URBAN COMMUNITY CONTROL: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE SUBURBAN EXPERIENCE?

David W. O'Shea
Department of Education
University of California
Los Angeles

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Introduction

Advocates of community control over local schools seek deference to parental preferences from the professional staff. In order to secure such deference, control proponents have sought to "alter the relationship between administrators of the existing system and the people is such a way as to bring the services offered more closely into line with what is desired by the clientele" (Wilcox, 1966: 15). As to means by which relationships might be altered, specific proposals include: (1) Staff accountability to parental representatives for student learning; (2) parental participation in the selection of school principals; (3) parental participation in school level decision-making, and (4) use of school facilities and resources for community social and economic development (See Wilcox, 1966).

In practice, only partial steps have been taken toward implementing these means in the two cities that, to date, have decentralized some measure of educational governance; New York City and Detroit. To carry implementation further, both the Fleischmann Commission (1973) and Zimet (1973) have proposed that the new community districts in New York City be granted full autonomy, making them equivalent to all other districts in the state. In effect, community districts in the cities would then take on the governance structure characteristic of suburban districts, with the possible exception of dependence upon local fiscal resources, which as we shall see is a rather important exception. However, this proposal to fully decentralize urban school district governance raises a couple of important policy-related questions. The first is whether, in practice, the structure of suburban school district governance actually does facilitate local community control over public elementary and secondary schooling? If it does, then the second question is what can we learn from the suburban experience that would help guide policies directed toward facilitating community control over schools serving inner-city areas?

Who controls suburban schools?

Examination of the literature on suburban school district governance indicates a paradox, to which Boyd (1975) draws attention. Several political scientists,[1] most recently Zeigler and Jennings (1974), have concluded that the public exerts little control over the instructional program in the public schools. Boards of trustees, theoretically representative of the public interest, informally delegate their policy-making responsibilities regarding curriculum and instructional procedures to the district superintendent. One consequence is that: "Instead of the ideal flow of control from the public to its surrogate to the object of control, the process is reversed. When the leader establishes policy, it is legitimized by the formal authority and subsequently 'sold' to the public" (Zeigler and Jennings, 1974: 5). Similarly, Lyke (1970: 123) concludes that: "suburban public education, even under a community control model, is by and large shaped by the teachers and administrators. Lay members of suburban boards lack the expertise and the time to shape most policies . . . . generally they just review educators' own decisions and handle routine, trivial questions."

Clearly, therefore, elected boards seem not to exercise their formal responsibility of translating constituents' preferences into educational policies. Such policies are determined largely by professional educators within the formal organizational structure of the public school system. Yet, despite this professional dominance, suburban school systems generally enjoy a relatively high level of parental satisfaction, as Boyd (1975) reminds us. Parental concern typically is oriented more toward ensuring sufficient resource inputs for the local schools rather than toward program content or methods, or toward the evaluation of learning outcomes. How, then, can one account for the fact that a relatively undemocratic system of educational governance does, in fact, prove responsive to parental preferences in most suburban communities, while in the inner-city areas the schools

remain sufficiently alienated from their clients to have provoked demands for community control? In the suburbs, client satisfaction legitimates prevailing governance practice. By contrast, in many inner-city areas strong client dissatisfaction has undermined public support for the existing centralized structures of educational governance. Clearly, as Boyd (1975) argues, part of the difference between the suburban and inner-city experience is associated with the fact that educators themselves generally come from the same social background as most of their suburban clients, and thus share similar attitudes regarding how schools should be run, and what should be taught. However, other factors also are at work and an understanding of these is a necessary basis for the development of policies aimed at achieving the objectives of proponents of community control.

To explore these factors associated with the differential responsiveness of suburban as compared to inner-city schools, it is helpful to analyze several dimensions of educational governance, including the existing pattern of governmental decision-making in school districts; the ways in which educational leadership comes to be delegated informally to professional educators within the organizational system; conditions that constrain suburban educators to be responsive to parental concerns; contrasting conditions inhibiting school level responsiveness to inner-city parents, and the implications of these latter conditions for policies aimed at the attainment of community control objectives. Initially, therefore, we turn to a perspective on the structure of decision-making in school districts in general.

The structure of decision-making

Setting the stage for the present pattern of board-professional staff relationships characteristic of school systems, urban and suburban, have been ideas developed within the municipal reform movement that have proven influential in shaping existing structures of school governance. For example, in New York City the highly decentralized school system of the nineteenth century fell into general

disrepute by the 1880's. As Ravitch (1975) reports, the public schools of that era had poorly trained and low paid staffs, dependent upon political patronage for their appointments. Discipline for students was severe, teaching was largely by rote, and the dropout rate from elementary grades was high. Reformers such as Joseph Rice blamed the system's failures upon

> the complexity and inefficiency of the decentralized system. The central problem, he thought, was that no one was accountable for errors. He proposed a radical reorganization, dividing the system's functions between an expert Board of Superintendents, which would have complete control of educational policies, and a central Board of Education, which would stick strictly to the system's business affairs (Ravitch, 1975: 4).

This division of labor between lay board and professional staff has come to be the prevailing model in American education. One consequence is the dominance of what Allison (1971) calls organizational processes in determining school district policies, at least within limits permitted by state regulations.[2] Allison (1971) proposes that governmental decision-making may be analysed from the perspectives of three different models, each of which throws light upon a different facet of the structure of decision-making. A rational model assumes that the decision-making group acts in unison to select from among alternative means the one most likely to facilitate goal attainment at minimum cost. Efficiency criteria take precedence in guiding the choice. Required, therefore, is fairly complete knowledge of means-ends relationships. However, as Mannheim (1960) has pointed out, in most areas of social life the knowledge base for the application of means-ends rationality is notably lacking. This form of rationality he labels "functional," arguing that it finds its most typical expression in the organization of industrial production, where the functions to be performed for achieving a given outcome can be specified closely on the basis of scientific knowledge, as in the case of automobile production, or of an oil refinery.

In the absence of tested knowledge regarding means-ends relationships, choice between means to attain given ends is not inherently irrational, but generally comes

to be based upon plausible, or "substantially" rational grounds. Substantial rationality Mannheim (1960: 508) defines as "an act of thought which reveals intelligent insight into the interrelations of events in a given situation." Allison's (1971) rational model, therefore, should be divided between a functionally rational model and a substantially rational model. It is clear, for example, that arguments for and against community control are structured by substantial rather than functional rationality. However, apart from the absence of a science of education constraining policy-makers in school districts to base decisions upon substantial rationality, two other bases that structure decision-making are proposed by Allison (1971); political bargaining between members of the group charged with making policy and/or reliance of decision-makers upon processes within the formal organization responsible for policy implementation. Typically, as in the case of school districts, the organization contains resources of relevant professional expertise.

Of these two additional perspectives from which educational decision-making might be analysed, historically, as Ravitch's (1975) discussion indicates, political bargaining among board members, and the interests they represent, fell into disrepute owing to its abuse by political leaders in the patronage-oriented environment of urban politics in the recent past. To avoid these abuses, governance of public education at the school district level nowadays commonly is non-partisan, and governing boards generally base their decisions upon information provided, and recommendations made, by their professional staff. This delegation of responsibility to professional educators is largely the result of the municipal reform movement, reinforced by the work of professional associations. As a consequence, Zeigler and Jennings (1974: 4) are able to conclude, from their study of over 80 school districts, that: "Although the school board has uncontested formal authority over local educational systems, evidence . . . . indicates that the leadership over educational policy rests as much or more with the superintendent." Further, their evidence demonstrates that while informal delegation of policy leadership to professional experts

may violate principles of democratic government, by and large the public is not dissatisfied with the consequences. In fact, despite the concern of Zeigler and Jennings (1974) for governmental structures responsive to the public will, their own data show that the major concern of the public regarding public schooling is for the problem of providing educators with adequate resources with which to carry out their tasks.

Public attitudes

For about 60 of the 83 districts studied by Zeigler and Jennings (1974) the authors were able to utilize data gathered in an opinion survey of a sample of the adult population. In this sub-set of districts the persons interviewed for the survey were asked, among other things: "In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing education in this school district" (p. 125). Interestingly, an average of 33 percent of the respondents in each district did not identify any problem. Of those who did cite a problem, the highest average proportion across all districts, 35 percent, named resource inputs; "need more money, revenue base inadequate, plant expansion, lack of public support" (Zeigler and Jennings, 1974: 128). The problem area attracting the next highest proportion of respondents was teachers and teaching, cited by an average of 23 percent of interviewees in each district who identified an educational problem. However, within this category the authors grouped responses concerning both teacher quality and teachers' demands upon the system, leaving one unclear as to which problem is attracting most attention. The educational program itself, the topic of most interest in the context of the present paper, was criticized by an average of only 15 percent of those respondents identifying an issue, or by what amounts to 10 percent, on average, of all persons interviewed in each district. Criticism of school district governance was even less in evidence, being made by only 8 percent of the persons in each district who identified an issue, or by less than an average of 6 percent of all respondents per district.

Clearly, therefore, while Zeigler and Jennings (1974), Lyke (1968), and others,[3] fault school district governance for its undemocratic characteristics, public dissatisfaction with the schools, or with their governance, is not rampant. In fact, events of the past decade indicate that dissatisfaction is focussed within low income minority group communities in the cities. In the suburbs, at least, parents have been able to achieve an educational system that meets the expectations of most, suggesting that while school boards may not be effective agencies of public control over the schools, other means are used to achieve this same objective. Drawing upon Allison's (1971) perspective discussed earlier, it will be argued here that the major means by which parental control actually is achieved in suburbs is through parental influences upon the organizational, rather than the formally political, structure of the educational system. Two conditions facilitate exercise of parental constraint upon school system organization. One is the dependency of the organization upon the district's electorate for access to local material resources. The other is the relatively high level of organizational resources available in most suburban populations. In inner-city communities, absence of both these conditions is associated with parental dissatisfaction and related demands for local control over educational governance. For an understanding of how systemic dependency helps structure school-community relations in ways that favor organizational responsiveness to parental preferences it is helpful to look at Thompson's (1967) theory of organizations as open systems.

Organizational responsiveness

In Thompson's (1967) view, an organization's dependency upon its social environment elicits specific initiatives from the organization itself. To manage dependency, organizations develop specialized structures to span the organization-environment boundary. Boundary-spanning is the process by means of which an organization receives inputs of information and resources from environmental elements and, conversely, exerts some measure of control over these same elements in order

to achieve predictability regarding inputs, and also to protect, or "buffer," the technical, or operational, level of the organization from externally generated disruptions. To the degree required in order to stabilize environmental inputs, organizations are likely to create specialized units, and even to adapt their structure, for example by decentralizing administration.

In the case of school districts, dependency upon the electorate for referenda approval helps elicit PTA's at each school. Parent groups structure an exchange relationship between school officials and the more active parents. The former use the PTA's as sounding boards for parental opinion, while parents trade their support at the polls for some measure of influence over the organizational processes determining school level, and ultimately district level, educational policies. This boundary-spanning process, in addition to the parental role in structuring board-constituent relationships, helps maintain congruence between parental preferences and educational practices in most suburban school systems.

In addition to their influential linkages with local schools, parents, of course, play an important role in structuring board-community relations, a role that is the major source of parental leverage upon the system. As Martin (1970: 148) concluded, on the basis of data from 200 suburban districts, public education "is in essence a special governmental program run by and for and with the valiant support of the population comprising parents with children of school age." As school district government generally is conducted on a non-partisan basis, partisan division being dysfunctional for public support of referenda, the parental population forms the basis for what becomes, in effect, a pro-school party, structured by the PTA. As James (1969) points out, while parents press for an extension of educational services, others in the community seek to reduce property taxes. One outcome of the potential of parents for managing school system dependency in the political arena is that: "Parent-Teacher Associations come into being as a response to expectations that teachers can get higher salaries and parents can get better services for their

children if they work together to counteract the influences on budget decisions by taxpayers associations" (James, 1969: 58).

This mutuality of interest among parents and professional educators, structured by the PTA, creates an environment favoring responsiveness by school administrators to parental expectations as aggregated within parents' organizations, or similar support groups. However, the effectiveness of this channel of informal parental control is a function of membership strength, which in turn varies with community status, a factor that is significant in relation to the evident gap between inner-city schools and their environing populations. Before exploring further the problems of school-community relations in urban centers, it is helpful to look briefly at some suburban districts.

Suburban examples

Examples of the influence exerted by parents are provided by the experiences of several elementary school districts in the Chicago suburbs (See O'Shea, 1971). A particularly interesting case is that of Lake City, pseudonym for a wealthy suburb whose schools enjoy a nationwide reputation. (See O'Shea, 1971: 171-75). In this district, when studied in the 1960's, the posited exchange relationship between parents and schools was very evident. The PTA mobilized electoral support for referenda, which invariably passed, while the schools responded to demands channeled through the parents' organization. In the district, PTA's were well organized at each school. At the school level principals were actively encouraged to be responsive to their parents, and allowed some discretion over budget allocations with responsiveness in mind. For example: "One board member reported that in his home area there were a lot of artists and scientists. . . . These parents wanted art and science in the schools. To accomodate their demands the principal worked out programs with parents who volunteered to help teach these subjects " (O'Shea, 1971: 171).

At the district level, the man who served as superintendent until 1966

reported that several programs originated with PTA pressure, including a special program for crippled children, foreign language instruction, and a family life program. In the case of foreign languages organizational processes in shaping policy were supplemented by political action. Board approval had been refused on grounds of cost, but as the former superintendent recalled:"I was not above aiding and abetting the parents and indicated to them that they should let board members know their views. As a consequence, mail came in from all over town, and finally the board gave in" (O'Shea,. 1971: 172).

In the case of the family life program, some parents wanted to add instruction on venereal disease to the junior high school program. To explore materials, a study committee was created by the PTA. This committee reviewed films being used by the high school, and recommended those thought suitable for the eighth grade. PTA proposals, according to the organization's president, generally were based upon extensive study. In the president's view, such preparation avoided the parents being

thought of as busybodies. "As a result," she said, "the schools have always done what we asked" (O'Shea, 1971: 173).

Another pattern of school-community relations is exemplified by events in a district we call Winfield. Again, the population is largely white collar, but not as affluent as in Lake City. In this case three organizations mediated between the community and the school district; the PTA, National Council of Jewish Women, and League of Women Voters. Though the Jewish population was estimated to be 9 percent of the 30,000 residents of the district, the 200 members of the NCJW were a major source of electoral support for district referenda, and board elections. Consequently, proposals from the organization were taken very seriously by the superintendent. Every three years the local unit conducted a survey of the community to identify unmet needs. In 1964 the survey revealed the lack of a program in the schools for perceptually handicapped children. Following a public meeting organized by the NCJW, and articles in the local press, the board, on the superintendent's recommendation, authorized appointment of a teacher for the perceptually handicapped. The same NCJW group also launched a junior great books program, later adopted by the Winfield schools and staffed by volunteers who met with student groups twice each week.

While both Lake City and Winfield experienced specific curriculum related demands, pressures upon school officials were handled more covertly among the other 13 elementary districts studied, rather in the manner suggested by Dahl (1961: 156). The latter concluded that the PTA is

> useful to head off or settle conflicts between parents and the school system. A shrewd principal often uses the PTA to find out what problems are in the parents' minds; he then brings about some adjustments in the school's program or perhaps allays the concern of the parents simply by discussing the problem with them.

For example, in Newland (See O'Shea, 1971: 333), another wealthy suburb, board members could recall no demands from parents, a fact they attributed to

the public's awareness that "the schools are watched over by a particularly dedicated superintendent, and that we have an extensive and excellent curriculum." The superintendent, however, related lack of overt demands upon the board or administration to the fact that he had developed the educational program with parental wishes very much in mind. Having served the district since it was a rural community in the 1940's, the superintendent had watched the population change over time. The newer residents, he recalled,

> were relatively enlightened and well educated sons and daughters of old Lake Shore residents. They were interested in cultural activities, such as art and music, which traditionally have been incorporated into the school programs of neighboring communities. Having had this background themselves, the parents wanted it in turn for their own children. (p. 333).

Apart from providing these programs, the superintendent also organized ungraded instruction through the third grade.

A similar responsiveness was found in another elementary district, Hamilton, whose population was less affluent than Newland's, but again predominantly white collar. Discussing demands from the public, the superintendent pointed out that the PTA provided a channel by which he and the staff were kept aware of parental sentiment. "The PTA," he noted, "provides an opportunity to determine the level of support for a program. If well received by the PTA's, you know there is support and you can move ahead" (O'Shea, 1971: 154). Further, as one board member pointed out:

> The parents demand a good background for their children, 80 percent of whom go on to college. At a PTA night you should hear the questions they ask! They want to know why the kids didn't have more homework, or why they are not studying a particular subject. This puts pressure on the administration.

While cases reported thus far illustrate responsive administration, with supportive boards, in the context of the issue of local control the question arises as to what happens when the organization is unresponsive to parents in suburban areas. It is interesting to note that this is something that is more likely to

happen in blue collar than in white collar communities, an outcome associated with the lower level of public participation in organizations in lower status areas. Consequently, boundary-spanning structures linking parents into organizational processes related to school district decision-making are relatively weaker. In the districts studied, when leaders among the parents finally concluded that the educational system was not going to respond to their preference on some important issue, they directed their efforts toward the governance, rather than the organizational, structure of the school district, moving to change the members of the board as an initial step in getting changes in the organization. In blue collar districts, given the weakness of non-political organizations, the typical structure utilized to mobilize public support behind a reform movement was a local political party, the one type of organization with well established linkages to residents in low income areas in the suburbs.

Among the fifteen districts studied (See O'Shea, 1971), eight served predominantly blue collar populations. Among these eight, between 1958 and 1968 four experienced parental revolts that changed their boards, and in three of these cases the new board subsequently replaced the superintendent. Among the seven white collar districts such a development occurred in only one during the same ten year period. In the one white collar district, an issue developed around efforts by the superintendent to discharge a teacher popular with the parents, an action supported by the board. Among the blue collar districts, in one case parents involved with the school became aware of some obviously bad administrative practices that were upsetting the teachers, and they decided to effect a change. Incumbent board members were active Democrats. The opposition was led by women active in the local Republican organization, a structure that provided an informal base for mobilizing the opposition. In a second blue collar district, parents became upset when the superintendent and the board

proposed a new school that appeared much too small in the light of projected population growth. In addition, the proposed site was the only recreation space available for the local children. When parental objections went unheeded, PTA leaders got the support of members of a community-wide organization formed to negotiate residents' claims upon the local government for public services. Working jointly with the latter group, which eventually reformed the local government, parents succeeded in replacing the board, and later the superintendent, thus clearing the way for the larger school, and a different site. In a third blue collar district, this one centering about a large steel mill, maladministration by the superintendent was again a major criticism. Parents among the older residents of the suburb, who provided the community leadership, structured by the Republican Party, became upset by a number of incidents ranging from the roof being blown off a newly constructed school, through a child being injured in a classroom brawl, to an unanticipated proposal from the superintendent for a tax rate increase, in which he was supported by his board. The district already spent more then its neighbors, being financially well endowed thanks to its high industrial property valuation. Parental upsetment again found expression in an organized movement that changed the board, and superintendent, and that drew its leaders from parents active in the Republican Party. The superintendents supporters were largely among newer residents, most of whom were Democrats. In the fourth blue collar case it was newer residents who became disenchanted with the level of educational services, and the district's administration. The main target was the board president, a man who held the office for twenty years. In this instance, parental revolt was led by a woman who was the PTA president. The incumbent board president was the local leader of the Democratic Party, and all his children attended parochial school. To secure his defeat, the PTA president persuaded the leading Republican in the community to run for office,

an initiative that assured help at the precinct level from other active Republicans.

While all five cases of board and administrator change were, of course, episodic, it is apparent that over time parental preferences have to be respected in suburban districts, as Ianaconne and Lutz (1970), and more recently Boyd (1975), have argued. Kenneth Clark may therefore be justified in basing his support for community control in minority neighborhoods of the cities upon the suburban example. In his introduction to Fantini, et al (1970: ix-x), Clark writes:

> Community control of schools is a given in many of the towns, smaller cities and suburbs of the nation. If an epidemic of low academic achievement swept over these schools, drastic measures would be imposed. Administrators and school boards would topple, and teachers would be trained or dismissed. If students were regularly demeaned and dehumanized in those schools, cries of outrage in the PTA's would be heard - and listened to - and action to remove the offending personnel would be taken immediately. Accountability is so implicit a given that the term "community control" never is used by those who have it. "Community control," as this book makes clear, is to be understood rather as a demand for school accountability by parents to whom the schools have never accounted, particularly those parents of low status groups in Northern cities.

The question, then, is why have not schools serving inner-city communities been responsive to parental preferences, as Clark, and also Wilcox (1966) eloquently argue, and what can be done to bring about such responsiveness?

Inner-city problems

Unresponsiveness of inner-city schools to their parental populations is associated with the absence of the two conditions found important for the contrary condition in suburban communities; system dependence upon access to local fiscal resources, and the presence of organizational resources within the school district population. In terms of both factors, inner-city communities are in a weak position. These communties generally are characterized by low family incomes and low per capita

property valuation. Consequently, the inner-city population contributes a relatively small proportion of the overall local revenue of city school systems. In addition, in cities where voter approval is required for construction bonds and tax rate increases, the proportion of residents in low income minority group areas who actually vote is relatively low. Further, with regard to mobilizing parents, either to vote for referenda, or to bring pressure upon school officials, organizational resources are few. Clark comments upon this latter problem in his introduction to Fantini, et al (1970: xi), noting that:

> As most of the community action projects of the antipoverty program demonstrated, unfamiliarity with power and status, lack of experience with organizational skills, and apathy, disunity, and cynicism associated with long repression often characterize the communities of the poor, weakening their capacity to compete effectively with reinforced power and rendering the community vulnerable to those who would exploit it for their own ends.

Not only are the organizational structures of inner-city communities relatively weakly developed, limiting the possibilities for communication between the public and the schools, but school responsiveness to whatever inputs parents do make is likely to be at a modest level in a setting where organizational dependency upon the local electorate is either low, or non-existent. Interestingly, the movement for community control in minority communities has tried to deal with both problems. With regard to organization dependency, it is unlikely that inner-city schools, even under a fully decentralized system of governance, would be left to depend upon what must be terribly inadequate local fiscal resources, the condition that helps constrain organizational responsiveness in suburban communities. However proponents of community control do propose what amounts to a functional substitute; accountability of school staffs to parents for learning outcomes, as noted at the beginning of this paper. Institutionalization of accountability is even more likely to constrain staff responsiveness than fiscal dependency.

The problem of organizational resources within inner-city communities is more complex, but experience to date suggests that a possible solution is available

through community development programs, along the lines of war on poverty's community action. Such programs can create the necessary organizational infrastructure to mediate between the community and the schools. In fact, this is precisely what the community action programs succeeded in doing for a time in the 1960's, thus starting the whole movement for community control. The potential of these programs is indicated further by developments in New York City's new Community District 7, covering the poverty area of South Bronx, details of which have been reported by Zimet (1973).

Community action and community control.

Where city governments permitted, as in New York and Detroit, community action programs of the 1960's allowed minority leaders to mobilize ghetto residents around local problems, including education, in order to work for control over "the vital social and cultural institutions of their own community. In this way, cultural achievements undeniably their own could help end the imputation of Negro inferiority by transvaluing color as a symbol in American social thought" (Greenstone and Peterson, 1973: 94). Further, redistribution of power to local communities from highly centralized urban governments gave promise of facilitating a more equitable allocation of municipal services to the poor in general, but particularly to the black population, of whose 22 million members no less than 80 percent lived in urban areas by 1965 (See Piven and Cloward, 1971: 214). In the case of educational services, only in New York City and Detroit has governance been decentralized, and there only to a modest extent. However, by contrast, other urban school systems have limited decentralization to their administrative structure. Related to the more extensive changes in New York and Detroit is the fact that in both cities minority leaders were able to secure access, through community action programs, to the basic organizational resources necessary for mobilizing a constituency. Apart from providing new grass-roots leaders with full-time positions, the poverty programs also provided these same leaders with money, office space, secretarial assistance, telephones, mimeograph machines, and automobiles, all of which helped in generating and sustaining

public support behind demands for institutional changes. In New York City, as Seeley (1970) recounts, the Mayor's office encouraged the community action programs to organize parents, as the Mayor himself was quite critical of the poor performance of ghetto area schools.[4] By the summer of 1966 the predictable confrontation occurred. Despite a policy to locate new schools in areas that would ensure an integrated student body, the Board of Education authorized construction of a new intermediate school, IS201, in the center of East Harlem where the only potential students were either black or Puerto Rican. In the face of this decision, it was two community action organizations, Massive Economic Neighborhood Development (MEND), and HARYOU-ACT, that took on the task of mobilizing parents behind the demand for community control over the new building. This incident proved to be the point of departure for the movement to restructure educational governance in New York City, and throughout the other major urban centers of the country. Subsequently, community action agencies again provided the organizational base for the three experimental districts which the New York City school system approved in an effort to test out the community control idea.[5] Further, despite severe cutbacks in funding, we still find the community action program playing a key role in mediating between schools and the community in the poverty area of South Bronx, as Zimet (1973) reports in his study of the new Community District 7. Here, United Bronx Parents, a federally funded community program working among Puerto Rican residents, and poverty agenicies such as the South Bronx Community Corporation and the Hunts Point Community Corporation, structure community influence over the schools.

> U.B.P. conducts educational workshops for parents covering such topics as "How to Organize a Parents Association," "What is Decentralization?" "How to Visit and Evaluate a School," "Training for Local Control," etc. For attending these workshops, parents receive a stipend of $7.00 per session to help offset the costs of a baby sitter and transportation. . . .

> United Bronx Parents also gathers and maintains statistical data on the schools in the district, including ethnic composition of the student population and of the staff; age and utilization rate of the buildings; types of programs offered in each school; reading scores, class size, expenditure per pupil, and teacher experience by school. It has prepared analytical studies of the Board of Education's allocation of funds to District 7, of the budget for District 7 itself, and of the distribution of educational resources among the Bronx public schools. . . .
>
> United Bronx Parents is an ardent and militant protagonist for complete community control of the schools - control of school finances in particular. It has also pressed for the employment of black and Puerto Rican (especially Puerto Rican) teachers and supervisors in a proportion commensurate with the size of the black and Puerto Rican population in the district. . . . .
>
> A recital of the formal activities of the U.B.P., extensive as they are, does not do justice to the scope of the group's influence. Its strength stems, in large part, from the fact that it is a grass-roots organization. It is able to extend its influence through interlocking memberships with other community organizations such as the anti-poverty agencies and through informal relations and even extended family relationships within the community at large (Zimet, 1973: 78-79).

Apart from U.B.P., the poverty agencies are emerging in communities such as South Bronx as the focal points for community power, replacing the earlier political clubs and party organizations. Their power derives from the control they exercise over the disposition of federal funds, and associated employment. In South Bronx their power extends to influencing the utilization of over $7,000,000 spent annually for compensatory education by the schools in District 7. In particular, the agencies emphasise use of this money for hiring local parents as paraprofessionals in the schools, a procedure that aids local community development, and one that is handled in a way that reinforces the political power of the community poverty agencies. The latter, through an agreement worked out with the Board of Education (See Simmelkjaer, 1972), control the screening and hiring of at least half of all para-professionals employed with federal funds. Legitimating this practice is the legal requirement that plans for the utilization of compensatory education funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) must be coordinated with other agencies serving the same target population. Control over the hiring of para-professionals reinforces the leadership position within the community of poverty

agency officials, and also "contributes to the clout of the community corporations viv-a-vis the Community School Board" (Zimet, 1973: 67). This clout not only allows community leaders to influence incumbent board members, but also to influence who the incumbents will be. In 1970, of the nine persons elected to the board of Community District 7, seven had the endorsement of one poverty agency, the South Bronx Corporation (See Simmelkjaer, 1972: 236). Further, in the period of Zimet's (1973) study, conducted from 1970 through 1972, at least six of nine board members had overlapping memberships in poverty agencies or community action programs.

Overall, therefore, the investment of poverty funds in South Bronx has had an important impact upon school-community linkages. Externally funded community programs helped structure community-board relationships. United Bronx Parents, also a federally funded community action program, helped not only to link the board and the community, but as the district Superintendent acknowledged, acted as " a major channel of communication between the schools and the parents" (Zimet, 1973: 79), working closely with parents groups at each school. Finally, the paraprofessionals, also federally funded, of whom 500 served in the district's 22 elementary and junior high schools, provided an important continuing link between parents and classroom activities. While all these initiatives have yet to produce any measurable gains in the average level of student achievement produced by the schools, leading Zimet (1973) to argue that community districts should be granted full, rather than partial, autonomy, at least parents and professionals in South Bronx are cooperating in attacking the achievement problem, rather than letting this become the focus of conflict between the two groups. Further, and perhaps more importantly over the long term, external funding for community action and compensatory education is being used in ways that help the schools to contribute toward community economic and political development. Granting full autonomy to the community districts, if this

included the institutionalization of accountability procedures at the school level as proposed, for example, by the Fleischmann Commission (1973: 7, 57-59), would add to the influence of community groups relative to that of professional educators. In the absence of federal funds to help develop local community organizations, accountability would be almost essential for local leverage upon the educational system, though paradoxically there would then be little in the way of local organizations, at least in poverty neighborhoods, to structure parental leverage.

Conclusions

To conclude, therefore, it is apparent that in suburban school districts, by and large parental expectations are being met. While this outcome is rarely the result of parental preferences being formally transmitted via school boards to professional educators, alternative channels of influence are available. In practice, most school districts develop most policy by internal organizational processes. Parental linkage into these processes is assured by two conditions; system dependency upon local resources, and organizational resources within the community capable of mobilizing public support behind school district referenda.

Extrapolating from the suburban experience, one can argue that decentralization of urban school district governance to local community districts will facilitate community control only to the extent that similar constraints upon the school system exist. What evidence we have from inner-city areas indicates that organizational resources generally are weak, and to date no proposal for decentralization has suggested leaving inner-city community districts dependent upon their very limited fiscal resources. However, accountability constitutes a functional substitute for fiscal dependence as a constraint upon school staffs to respond to parental preferences, and federal funding of community action programs could strengthen local organizational resources. Therefore, in the development of policies directed toward

facilitating control over their schools by parents of inner-city communities, priority should be given to accountability procedures and the funding of community action. Partial justification for a community action strategy lies in the fact that while compensatory education has largely failed to generate increased average levels of student achievement in schools serving inner-city communities, the best predictor of achievement is community status. Funding community action would assist community development and ultimately, albeit indirectly, serve the objective of improved schooling outcomes sought both by compensatory education and by community control.

FOOTNOTES

1. Relevant studies, in addition to Zeigler and Jennings (1974), include those by James (1969); Kerr (1964); Lyke (1968); Martin (1962).

2. For a discussion of the utility of Allison's models for the analysis of school district governance, see Peterson and Williams (1972).

3. See studies listed under Footnote 1.

4. For background on developments in New York City, and a bibliography, see LaNoue and Smith (1973)

5. For details of the role of community action programs in relation to the experimental districts in New York City see LaNoue and Smith (1973).

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